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UNCLAS KINGSTON 000317

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FOR CA/OCS/ACS/WHA (RBRANSON), WHA/CAR (WBENT)

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SUBJECT: JAMAICAN AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF  
FREQUENT PRISON RAPE

1. SUMMARY: On January 19, 2006, the Jamaican National Security Ministry initiated an inquiry into allegations of daily acts of rape committed against inmates at the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre, where American prisoners are regularly incarcerated. The inquiry followed published complaints of sexual abuse at the facility by a former prison doctor, Dr. Raymoth Notice. Within days of publication of the articles, an American inmate was transferred to St. Catherine's, allegedly for his safety, after being accused of homosexual acts. END SUMMARY

2. The Jamaica Observer reported on January 19, 2006 that Dr. Raymoth Notice, former doctor at St. Catherine's Correctional Facility for men in Spanish Town, and the immediate former mayor of Spanish Town, wrote to the Commissioner of Corrections urging authorities to investigate mass rape at the facility. Dr. Notice also reportedly expressed similar complaints at a St. Catherine Parish Council meeting, where he characterized the victims of the prison rapes as predominantly mentally ill inmates and non-violent offenders. Dr. Notice served as prison doctor at the St. Catherine prison from 1998 to 2001, and during that period he spoke out against the abuse of prisoners.

3. The Observer also reported that an anonymous prison warden corroborated Dr. Notice's allegations. The warden reportedly stated that prison officials have turned a blind eye to sex trade in the prison, and that other wardens and inmates regularly charge fees to rent out certain inmates, most of whom are homosexual or mentally ill, for sex.

4. The National Security Ministry announced its investigation into the rape allegations the same day the Observer printed its first article. In later articles, National Security Minister Peter Phillips was quoted as saying that the GOJ would expand the prison rape inquiry to include Jamaica's other maximum security prison, the Tower Street facility. He added that the Department of Correctional Services has instituted significant administrative and infrastructural changes to mitigate the likelihood of occurrences of abuse.

5. The prison rape allegations were the subject of four news articles and two editorials collectively in the Jamaica Observer and the Jamaica Gleaner in late January, 2006. The articles generally expressed a sense of public outrage at the possibility that prison rape might be commonplace in Jamaica, and pressed government officials to take appropriate action.

6. In late January, an American inmate at the minimum security Tamarind Farm facility was transferred to St. Catherine's following allegations of homosexual activity. St. Catherine's officials insist the move was for his protection and are housing the inmate in the hospital ward as a precaution. Post will regularly visit the inmate and monitor his situation.

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